

[Love it when you look my way](#) by [Luddleston](#)

Series: [Myrmidon Oneshots \[2\]](#)

Category: The Iliad - Homer

Genre: Age Difference, Anal Sex, Blow Jobs, Dirty Talk, First Kiss, First Time, First Time Bottoming, Flirting, Getting Together, Hand Jobs, M/M, Pre-War, badass Automedon, other various Myrmidons

Language: English

Characters: Automedon (Ancient Greek Religion & Lore), Phoenix son of Amyntor (Ancient Greek Religion & Lore)

Relationships: Automedon/Phoenix

Status: Completed

Published: 2021-12-31

Updated: 2021-12-31

Packaged: 2022-12-19 10:49:53

Rating: Explicit

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 1

Words: 8,309

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

Automedon had been training with the Myrmidons for almost a month before he first conversed one-on-one with their lead commander.

Phoenix is handsome and Automedon, like half the palace, is smitten with him. Phoenix notices, and, to Automedon's general astonishment, actually returns that affection.

Love it when you look my way

Author's Note:

- For [miraculan](#).

FIRST! FIC! IN! THE! SHIP! (i think. i couldn't find a tag so i made one.)

Thank you to Icky/Miraculan for opening my eyes to how goddamn beautiful Phoenix is. Much of these headcanons are stuff we chatted about and this fic wouldn't exist without you!

Automedon had been training with the Myrmidons for almost a month before he first conversed one-on-one with their captain.

Phoenix, son of Amyntor, was an intimidating figure. Automedon knew little of his past, aside from the parts that intersected with Phthia's history. All he'd been told was that Phoenix was from another kingdom, and after he defected to Phthia, King Amyntor had launched an attack. Phoenix fought alongside the Myrmidons, and after proving himself in that battle, had risen through the ranks to captaincy.

Of course, all this had happened before Automedon had come to the palace, back when he was working his family's farm in Thessaly. Automedon personally knew Phoenix as the man who pushed him and all the others to their limits, a name that was cursed often by recruits who wanted to slack off and found Phoenix unforgiving. They called him a hard-ass, but with rueful honor in it, because Phoenix worked as hard as any of them.

His was also a name that was whispered among the men for... other reasons.

Phoenix was handsome. Automedon could not ignore this during their first conversation. He became very conscious of his placement, holding himself stock-still, taking special care not to lean any closer to Phoenix, who had called him over after a day's training.

"You're the one who can actually tame those beasts Peleus calls chariot-horses, aren't you?" Phoenix asked, an upturned quirk to his mouth. He had a scar on his lips that pulled a bit when he smiled.

"Aye, sir."

Phoenix shook his head and clicked his tongue, the mass of fiery curls tied back at his nape shaking with the movement. "I don't know how you do it."

"I've always been good with animals, sir."

Phoenix ducked his head so he could put them more on the same level—Automedon was not short but he was not particularly tall, either, and Phoenix was lanky, lean, and a good head taller than him. "Hey. Relax, I'm not here to scold you. You're stiff as stone. I just wanted to talk to you about—forgive me, I don't know your name."

He gave it. He must have given it. But he was drawn in by the warmth of Phoenix's eyes, the little furrow between his brows born of genuine concern. He was older than Automedon. Older by more than a decade, maybe more than two. It showed especially in his eyes, the lines in the corners that appeared when he focused on Automedon. These, too, were handsome. Automedon couldn't stop the hammering of his heart.

"You're favoring your right leg. Are you feeling alright?"

Automedon finally moved, passing his palm over the back of his head in a familiar gesture of embarrassment. "Ah. I did strain myself a bit riding yesterday."

"Where does it hurt?" Phoenix asked him, that look of concern deepening.

"Here," he said, indicating the muscle that kept twinging, the long one on the back of his thigh.

"Did you stretch it?"

"Just as usual." Attractive as Phoenix was, being placed under that analytical look was a bit unnerving.

"Let me help, then," Phoenix said, leaning the staff he'd been holding to demonstrate spear work against the wall of the arena the Myrmidons trained in. "Come over here? The ground is so dusty in the yard, it'll cling for days." He turned and left, not checking that Automedon was following.

Of course Automedon was following.

Phoenix led him to a room where armor was stored, the impressive black leather that Automedon would someday be fitted for as a Myrmidon himself. The room had no windows, to keep the leather from fading in the sun, and Automedon had to blink a few times to adjust from going from sunlight to torch-light. The room smelled of the oils used to polish armor, and the familiar scent of leather.

They myrmidons all wore the same armor but it was most striking on Phoenix, the bright red of his hair against the black. "Alright," he said, in the same voice he used to command the trainees on the field. "Lie on your back, then. I'll help you."

Automedon obeyed instantly, shifting until he didn't have a particularly uncomfortable seam in the flagstone digging into his head. He elevated his knee on the side that hurt, and felt the muscle give an irritated twitch at the angle. "How is this supposed to work?"

Phoenix knelt before him and Automedon's heart leapt to his throat. He was forced to swallow it down and look at the ceiling to keep his eyes from going wide with shock as Phoenix placed himself with his knees astride Automedon's relaxed leg, his hands on Automedon's elevated knee.

"Extend your leg up, with your feet pointed to the ceiling. I'll press forward, pushing your knee towards your chest. You keep your leg straight, and let me know if you're in any particular amount of pain—you wouldn't have been moving as well as you did in training if you'd torn the muscle, but still."

Automedon attempted to catch his breath without looking like he was doing it.

He has me beneath him like he's going to—

The ache in his leg and the slow pull of his muscle extending distracted him from any other thoughts floating through his head. It started to twinge where it had been, and Phoenix's palm ran down his thigh, finding the twitch and massaging there with the heel of his hand, soft. "How does that feel? Anything hurt?"

It felt *glorious* and Automedon was only a man—a young man, shy of twenty, there was only so much control he had over his body and his cock especially—*don't get hard, dammit, anything but that*. He'd not yet received his armor, he was only in a tunic. It would be extremely obvious.

"Automedon." Phoenix prompted him again.

"It doesn't hurt."

"Good. A few more moments—relax, you're starting to get tense. You're sure this isn't causing you any pain?"

"No, I'm fine." Except that Phoenix's hands were warm and sure and he had calluses that rubbed pleasantly against the smooth skin of Automedon's thigh and Automedon could *not* look at him.

"Ah. Alright. Back down, then. Good."

He wasn't sure what he'd done that deserved any praise but he kept his knee bent so as to at least somewhat obscure a partial erection waiting to happen. He just needed a moment.

"How does it feel?"

"Better, sir."

"Good." Phoenix extended a hand to him, pulling him to his feet. He truly did feel less pain. "Come to me if you need that again, although you're young, I imagine it'll heal fast."

"Yes, sir."

He turned, didn't run away, but it was a near thing. Everyone else had gone to the dining hall. If Automedon took a detour back to his room, stripped off his tunic, and got off with Phoenix's name on his tongue and the feel of Phoenix's hand on his thigh, nobody would ever have to know.

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After that, Automedon couldn't help the way he mooned after Phoenix, staring at his hands working, the way he moved in a fight, agile and still very much in his prime. He had a warrior's build but it was hard-fought-for; Automedon knew he had once been a prince who likely began his tenure at Phthia with no combat experience.

The rest of the Myrmidons caught on, of course, because in addition to being elite warriors, the Myrmidons were all handpicked to be intelligent. And of course, as a brotherhood of warriors, they used their skills of observation to give their brothers-in-arms shit.

Menesthios, the grandson of King Peleus who would have been prince of Phthia had Achilles not come along a few years after him, had even noticed, and Automedon did not feel as comfortable shoving him away when he teased as he did with the other men his own rank, even though Menesthios Automedon's age and joked with him like they were peers.

"You know his reputation, right?" Menesthios said, leaning heavily into Automedon's side, a little tipsy already. It was the night after Automedon had received his armor, and the Myrmidons treated this as a cause for celebration.

"Who? What? I know *your reputation*." Automedon was perhaps a bit tipsy.

"While I am very curious about that—" Menesthios leaned his forearm on Automedon's shoulder and bent in to talk to him close, even though Menesthios was a demigod who had double-pointed ears and could hear at some distance, "—I was talking about Phoenix."

"I don't know what you're referring to," Automedon said sullenly, in a way that meant he did.

Phoenix had a position of particular privilege in Peleus' court, and of course this meant he would love whoever he wanted. He was unmarried despite his age, had no children, and Automedon had also heard the rumors that he slept with exclusively men. Automedon, himself, was not bothered by this fact, although he heard this was upsetting to many a lady who passed through the palace.

Especially when Phoenix (whether intentionally or not) charmed their fiances and husbands and sons.

"You're pretty, Automedon. Almost as pretty as a girl." No remark on the fact that, for a man uninterested in women, this would not matter.

"Would you believe, *sir*, you are not the first to tell me that?" Automedon placed a particularly saccharine fakeness on Menesthios' title, taking another drink of his wine.

"Pfft. Of course I'm not, I swear to Aphrodite, every man in this company has propositioned you."

"Not all of them. Epeigeus is exclusively interested in women, I think."

"Yeah, well, so is Bathykles—so he says, rather—and he's been staring at your ass in your armor more than anybody else I've seen today. Obviously I am not interested, Phoenix is like my uncle and that would just make things weird." Menesthios flicked one of Automedon's ears. "But we're celebrating *you* tonight, so if you want something—somebody—you ought to go for it."

Automedon rubbed at an imaginary speck of dirt on his new bracer. His armor fit perfectly, the palace armorers made certain of that, but the weight of it was unusual to him yet, and his conscious effort not to fidget made him sit with an unnatural stiffness. Eudoros had said he'd loosen up once he had a few drinks in him, but that wouldn't be the case if his compatriots decided to make him *more* tense.

"Yes, thank you for the sage advice, Menesthios."

"That's 'commander' to you."

"Bastard."

"Is *that* the reputation you were talking about?" Menesthios' nose wrinkled up and he gave a loud crow of laughter. "Calling me a bastard is like calling water wet. Find better rumors next time." It was true that Menesthios, with his dark blue-gray skin and hair the color of deep river water, definitely did not belong to his very mortal father. Automedon hadn't really been remarking on that, though.

"I'm going to get another drink."

"Well, I do see Phoenix by the casks."

"Shut your *mouth*, Menesthios," Automedon said, to yet another bright peal of laughter.

He did meet Phoenix by the casks, though. Phoenix was bullying a particularly intoxicated soldier into heading home to sleep it off.

"You're not my mother," the drunk man slurred—it was Meriones, everyone had been offering him drinks while he was dancing. He was impressive, as skilled as any woman Automedon had ever seen. Less so, the more inebriated he became.

"Yes, however, I am your commander," Phoenix said. "Off with you. I don't want to see you hung over tomorrow morning."

Automedon chuckled to himself, pouring himself another drink on his way past this conversation.

"We're not doing drills the night after—"

"We *are*, and I'll go extra hard on you if you so much as squint at me like you've got a head."

With that, and with much grumbling, he was gone. Automedon could have taken his drink and run, but he hung around long enough to give Phoenix a look of commiseration, which meant Phoenix beckoned him over.

He leaned just as close to talk to Automedon as Menesthios had, and while it had simply been an annoyance in Menesthios' case, here Automedon was flattered by the attention and inclined to lean in himself instead of shoving away.

"Are you enjoying your night?" Phoenix asked him.

"Indeed, sir. Although, I must say, I am not overfond of so much fuss made about me." He sipped his drink. "It's not as if I've been made a Myrmidon just now, after all." He'd been part of their company for months. It was only that they'd just now gotten the armor.

"Yes, but you deserve the honor. You've proven yourself time and again. You work harder than most of the others. And you're talented in more than just fighting." Phoenix tipped back the rest of his own drink as he laid more compliments upon Automedon than he'd ever given him during his season of training. "I've recommended you to be a charioteer, actually. For the king, or myself. Or the prince, once he returns from the mountain."

Automedon's eyes went wide. "Really, sir?"

"Of course. Hardly anybody else I'd trust with both those infernal horses, and with my king or my prince's life."

"It would be an honor."

"Good man." Phoenix clapped him on the shoulder. "But it's not a night for work, only for revelry."

"I suppose so, sir."

"Go on, then. Have some fun," Phoenix said, shooing him away.

Automedon thought he could have plenty of fun with Phoenix, personally.

The night went long. The occasion was, as precisely nobody had warned him, an excuse to get the newest-armed Myrmidon *wildly* drunk. Automedon was flushed and floating and had lost track of pretty much everything (the time, his drink, most of his companions). He'd set to

wandering the perimeter of the courtyard to get some air when he came across Phoenix again, seated in a little nook just outside the door, nursing his drink rather than throwing it back as fast as he could.

Automedon said, "oh, sir, I thought you'd gone to bed," before he could stop himself. He had been sort of assuming Phoenix left when the king did. Peleus had taken his leave quite early, actually, but there was word Thetis was around and of course the king would be attending to his wife. Loudly and repeatedly, if *those* rumors were correct.

"Not as yet," Phoenix said. "Figured I would keep an eye on you lot." The corner of his eyes crinkle in the upper half of a grin. He was so handsome.

"Keeping an eye on anybody in particular?" The drink had loosened Automedon's tongue terribly, oh dear.

"You." It was frank, honest, and accompanied by Phoenix's warm gaze on him. "I know the lads use these sorts of things as an excuse to get the newest one of you drunk and see what happens." Ah. So he was keeping an eye on Automedon in the way of a friend or an older relative—exactly the sort of thing Automedon had never been able to stand when his elder brothers did it. He couldn't stand it now, either.

He didn't want Phoenix seeing him that way, as a child, as a chore.

And so he slid into his lap.

The little bench Phoenix sat on barely had room for Automedon's knees on either side, but he was small enough to cram in. There were plenty of alcoves like this, and Automedon had already seen a number of men making use of them with their wives or their lovers.

Phoenix was startled but quick to set down his drink and catch Automedon's waist, holding him steady. Which was good. Automedon was swaying a little bit.

"Keeping an eye on me for any other reason, sir?" Automedon asked, swallowing the knot in his throat.

"Always. You only seem to notice how pretty you are when you're drunk, hm?" Phoenix's voice was low and raspy, and stuck to Automedon like burrs in a horse's coat. "If I tell you something, will you forget it once you're sober?" His left hand wound around to Automedon's back, and his right cupped Automedon's cheek, his thumb rubbing over Automedon's lower lip.

"You can tell me." Automedon was trying hard to struggle past the haze of drink and etch this into his memory forever.

"I've noticed the way you look at me," Phoenix said. "But I'm also well-aware that attraction itself doesn't necessitate action. What I mean to tell you is this: if you want me, I'll have you."

Automedon didn't realize he'd stopped breathing until he gasped. *"I want you so much."*

"Not right now. You're too drunk."

Automedon's brow furrowed and he grasped Phoenix's shoulders a little tighter. "No, I can—"

"It's not about whether you can. I don't fuck men who might regret it later."

He could wholeheartedly say he wouldn't, but Phoenix's tone brooked no argument. Automedon slumped forward, leaning his head on Phoenix's shoulder. "I'm sorry," he said. "I just—want—"

"I know," Phoenix cooed, cupping the back of his head. "Come on, now. Why don't I take you back to your room, let you get some sleep?"

Sleep... sleep sounded incredible, actually. "Yeah. I'm sort of hungry, too, though."

"Yes, we probably should get you something to soak up all that wine, hm?"

Phoenix let Automedon lean on his shoulder as they stopped by the kitchens first, picking up whatever simple thing they could find, just bread and cheese, a simple meal. But such a simple meal had never tasted so good as

it did when Automedon was very drunk. Automedon was giggling about something—he had no idea what, but it was making Phoenix smile. Maybe he was laughing over the way he felt like a child sneaking treats.

Automedon wasn't sure how Phoenix knew where his room was, and certainly he had not told him with any sort of intelligible instruction. They made their way somehow regardless, and Phoenix deposited Automedon in a little pile on his bed, kneeling next to him for a moment, turning him onto his side.

"Do you feel sick at all?" he asked.

"No, no. I'm fine."

Phoenix blew out a breath and shook his head. It was completely dark but Automedon could still pick out the warm color of Phoenix's hair. The moonlight couldn't quite steal away all that red. "Young men have it easy," Phoenix said. "You probably won't even be hung over tomorrow."

"I'll be at training," Automedon reassured him.

"No, don't worry about that." Phoenix waved as if he was brushing the anxiety away. "Don't treat me as your commander when we're in a bedroom together."

Automedon responded to this with, "yes, sir," which made Phoenix laugh for some reason. He had an odd laugh, wheezy and raspy, but Automedon liked it.

"Sleep, then." Phoenix stood, squeezing his shoulder once before dragging his blanket over him. He smoothed Automedon's hair and later, once sober, Automedon swore he pressed a kiss there, too.

— — —

He was *horribly* embarrassed the next morning when he remembered that his *commander* had to tuck him into his bed like a mother. Awful. He almost wished he was hung over, or that he'd drunk to such an excess he

forgot the night's events and was not left so clearly aware how mortified he ought to be.

However.

The next thing he remembered was Phoenix holding his waist and saying, *"if you want me, I'll have you."*

Gods. Phoenix could have him whenever and wherever he wanted, as hard and fast as he wanted, and Automedon would be in absolute bliss.

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Opportunity for that did not come soon, however. After Thetis left the palace, Peleus announced he was making a journey to see his brother, Telamon. There were rumors of a Spartan queen disappearing, a Trojan prince suspected, and Peleus wanted to confirm all of this with his kin. Naturally, Phoenix went with him, and only the oldest and most trusted of Peleus' soldiers accompanied them.

They were gone for several weeks, and when they returned Automedon was not so confident that Phoenix still felt the same way about him as he had been. The rumors about the war had been confirmed, and there was anxiety surrounding the king's young ward, who was still on the mountain with Achilles. Automedon told himself that this was what was drawing Phoenix's attention, although a large part of him simply worried Phoenix had become disinterested. Such were the fears of a young man who had fallen hard for somebody.

He was in the stables late a few nights after their return. While they had been gone, Automedon had taken up the routine of caring for the horses Peleus doted on. He heard somebody approach with caution and felt no need to turn around and warn them. Most who frequented the stables knew to steer clear of Xanthus and Balius; Peleus' immortal warhorses were temperamental and dangerous enough to be weapons themselves.

The quiet call of his name, in a raspy voice, made Automedon turn.

"Phoenix. Hello," Automedon said, stilling the motion of the brush he'd been drawing down Balius' neck.

"I'm sorry we've not had a chance to speak since I returned," Phoenix said. Then a wry smile came on his face. "Although, you could have come to my bedroom any night. I know you're aware of where it is."

"You would want me there?"

Phoenix beckoned him closer, and Automedon patted Balius on the nose before stepping to where Phoenix stood, out of biting range. The horses tolerated Phoenix, but they did not like him. "Yes, I would want you there." He put a hand on Automedon's shoulder, telegraphing his movements clearly as he pulled him into an embrace, giving Automedon time to step away. When he didn't, Phoenix wrapped his arms around him, rubbing his back. "I'm terribly sorry I made you feel as if I wouldn't."

"You didn't—it was nothing you did. I just second guess myself."

One of the horses—Xanthus, Automedon could tell their noises apart—made an irritated whinny, and it made Phoenix jolt.

He took a step back from Automedon, looking over his shoulder at the large stall that held the warhorses. "Could we perhaps not have this conversation where there are two very large beasts who are quite protective of you a short distance away?"

"They wouldn't care," Automedon said, tossing his head dismissively.

"They seem like they do care, actually? Quite a lot. That one is giving me a terrible look for putting my hands on you, and that one is judging me, for I might try to kiss you here."

Automedon couldn't help but laugh. One of Peleus' most intelligent men, peerless in battle, and he was afraid of *horses*? "You can kiss me elsewhere, then," he said, his head already spinning from the idea of it.

Automedon's room was nearer to the stables, but they went to Phoenix's instead, as Automedon had expected. Phoenix had a much larger room, with a solid door rather than a curtained entrance to let the heat from a central hearth in. It had its own hearth, which cast warm light over Phoenix's armor and weapons hanging neatly on the wall. There was some jewelry on a table that Automedon had never seen Phoenix wear before, and a desk wedged into a corner by the bed.

The bed itself was large and comfortable, stacked with pillows, blankets, and warm fleece and furs. For Automedon, who had always had to share a bed with several of his brothers, his solitary bunk in the soldiers' quarters seemed like a luxury. This was far beyond even that.

"Can I get you anything? Food or drink?" Phoenix asked him, gesturing to a table that had been laid. Had he done so in anticipation of Automedon being here?

"No, thank you," Automedon asked, suddenly shy. His sexual experience was limited to teenage rendezvous in storerooms or hay lofts (or the woods, once). He was only familiar with fumbling touches and a hurry to get naked and get off. He'd never been *romanced*.

"Suit yourself." Phoenix pulled a bunch of grapes from the plate and plucked one of them off, popping it into his mouth as he crossed the room to the bed and sat down heavily, leaning back into a collection of pillows. "Come, sit by my side. You're going to have to get closer if you want a kiss, dear one."

Automedon walked slowly, taking great care not to stumble and make a fool of himself. He took off his sandals before joining Phoenix in the bed, because his legs were not quite long enough to stick off the edge like Phoenix's were.

"Would you mind getting mine as well?" Phoenix asked, bouncing his foot to make his meaning clear.

And so, the first part of him that Automedon touched while within the confines of his bedroom were his feet. He kept his movements perfunctory

and set Phoenix's sandals beside where he'd dropped his own, then got on the bed beside Phoenix, shifting up so that his back could rest against the same large cushion Phoenix was leaning on.

"You're sure you don't want some?"

Phoenix was asking about the food because Automedon was watching him eat like he was hungry, but that was just because he was enjoying the movements of Phoenix's hands and his mouth. It felt impolite to refuse a second time, though, so he took some, too, and for a moment they ate in silence, until Phoenix was holding an empty grapevine.

He tossed the stem in the direction of the hearth and it landed among the flames, popping and snapping before turning to ash.

"Sorry to forestall things," Phoenix said. "But I haven't had much chance to eat today. Things have been terribly busy. Terribly, terribly busy."

"I understand if we can't—if I can't stay long," Automedon said.

"Nonsense. I sought you out because I knew I had the time to spend with you." Phoenix sucked a bit of juice of his thumb—some of the grapes had been ripe to bursting—and turned on his side to fully face Automedon. "Tell me, what do you want to come of this?"

"I... don't know." There were several things he wanted, but all of them seemed too great an ask. *Fall in love with me? Make me yours forever?* That was a bit much for a first time. "I'd like sex, unless I've completely mistaken your offer."

Phoenix smiled, those little wrinkles folding at the corners of his eyes. "No, you understood what I want. I am asking you now for the particulars. How you like to make love. Are you a virgin, Automedon?"

"No!" He wasn't particularly sure *why* he was so adamant about the response.

Phoenix rubbed his fingers over his chin, rasping against his beard. "Have you ever been with a man, then?"

The answer to this, too, was, "no."

"No need to be shy about it," Phoenix said, fitting his fingers beneath Automedon's chin to lift his head. "You didn't grow up training among soldiers like many of these men did. It's partly why I admire your skill so greatly. You may not be the best among the Myrmidons, but you started with the least experience—although, I get away from my point, here. How much do you know about the ways in which two men are together?"

He spoke about sex as casually as he'd spoken about his snack. "I hear enough," Automedon said.

"And what have you heard that you are interested in doing with me?"

Phoenix asked this as if he *knew* that Automedon spent his nights touching himself and thinking of Phoenix, that it had been particularly bad ever since that night he'd walked Automedon home, that he'd acquired a little jar of oil for that particular purpose, to practice curling his fingers into himself and see how it felt.

Automedon gently brushed his fingers down Phoenix's chest, then again with more pressure, so he could feel the contour of Phoenix's muscle beneath his tunic. He wasn't bulky like some men, whipcord-thin but no less powerful for it. "I think about you—I think about you inside, sometimes." He had to hope Phoenix would forgive him his tiptoeing around instead of explicit forwardness.

Phoenix gave a low hum. His fingers were still on Automedon's chin, His thumb rubbed back and forth, then traced up to the corner of his mouth. "You are alright with me being the first to do this to you?"

I would want nobody else.

"Yes, sir."

"Ah-ah-ah. Don't call me 'sir,' here," Phoenix said, leaning to the side, fully relaxing into the pillows instead of holding his head up. "Not in my bed, darling, I'm not your commander now."

"What should I call you, then?" Automedon asked in a whisper, putting the flat of his hand to Phoenix's chest now. Feeling Phoenix's heart beat fast made him feel better about his own pulse racing.

"You might employ my name," Phoenix said, eyes glittering as he smiled, a little bit of a tease.

"Phoenix."

"There. You're perfect. And what about you? Are there any names you want me to avoid? Do you like when I call you sweet things?" Phoenix's hand left his face, and cupped Automedon's hand over his breast, instead.

"Yes. I like that." Automedon couldn't help but let his eyes flutter closed, basking in Phoenix's compliments.

"Well, then, my dear man. I believe I owe you a kiss."

The most recent kiss Automedon had was on the night of his armoring, a loud congratulatory drunken press of lips with an accompanying overaggrated *mwah!* from one of his comrades. Automedon had kissed him back just to tease, and had left the poor bastard red-faced and probably questioning a thing or two.

This was nothing like that.

It wasn't the soft, hesitant brush of a true first kiss, but the slow press of somebody who knew what he was doing, Phoenix pinning Automedon back against the pillows and winding fingers into his curls while they melted together. Automedon's hand slipped from Phoenix's chest to his ribs, putting his other arm around Phoenix's shoulders. Phoenix sucked on his lip and drank Automedon's moans, and Automedon went hot even faster than the last time Phoenix's hands had been on him.

"You're far too good at this," Phoenix said as he pulled away. If his usual voice was a rasp, his whisper was a scrape. Automedon felt goosebumps on every inch of his body. "Look at you." Phoenix traced his cheek and down his chest. "You're so pink."

"I don't normally flush," Automedon hurried to say.

"Clearly you do on occasion. I almost can't see your freckles."

"Well, that's good at least."

Phoenix was kissing the bridge of his nose, where most of those freckles were. "What makes you say that? You don't like them?"

"No."

"They're cute. Peleus has them too." It was strange to hear the king referred to so casually by his first name only. Automedon didn't think he'd ever paid attention to whether the king had freckles on his face. "Here. Get on top of me, like that."

Automedon straddled him, couldn't help the way his hips wanted to grind against Phoenix's. He found a growing erection in answer to his own, which was even more gratifying than he thought it would be. He smiled, shaking his head so his curls got out of his face.

"Good. See, this is how I wanted you, when I thought of you," Phoenix said. "You look like a young god, with the firelight behind you like that."

The compliment felt like somebody had poured warm water down his back and he tucked his face into his shoulder, as it embarrassed him a bit.

"Do you want to take your clothes off?" Phoenix asked him.

"That does normally precede sex," Automedon replied, moving his hands so Phoenix could tug the knot on his belt.

"Not necessarily. I could shove your tunic up and take you—nothing under, hm?"

"I was only going to bed," Automedon said, as Phoenix helped him pull it over his head, fluffing up his curls.

"Well, then, I have absolutely no such excuse," Phoenix said, shifting and letting Automedon return the favor, stripping off both Phoenix's layers and tossing both their clothes in a heap by the bed.

There was a wide scar across the middle of Phoenix's chest. Automedon's eyes and fingers went to it, tracing the arc it made. "Oh... how did this happen?"

"In service to my king," Phoenix said. "A long time ago. Peleus patched me up, it's fine."

"I didn't know his majesty was versed in the healing arts."

"His grandfather is Chiron—listen, Automedon, I really try *not* to talk about him in bed."

"Oh—yes, of course. Sorry."

"I was the one who brought him up," Phoenix replied with a shrug, and Automedon turned his attention to different parts of him.

Lower parts of him.

His cock was longer than Automedon's but very slim, so it did not look obscene. When Automedon touched him there, Phoenix's head dropped back onto the pillows and he squeezed at Automedon's thighs.

"Good," he said, voice strangled. "Keep going."

He did—this much, he knew how to do. It was like how he touched himself, maybe a little slower, so he could observe the way Phoenix reacted to his pleasure. A thin sheen of sweat broke out across his chest and neck, and his throat bobbed as he swallowed. He wasn't noisy but he was reactive enough that it was clear he enjoyed it, which was a step up from Automedon's first lover, a girl who hardly made a sound and was also quite still during the

whole time and made no indication that he was doing good or bad, and refused to tell him when he asked, as if he should know.

After a time, Phoenix took his wrist and held him firm. "Stop. If you keep it up I won't be able to fuck you. Stop grinning—yes, you felt very good, come here." Phoenix cupped both sides of his face and pulled Automedon in to kiss him. "So, so good," he muttered against his lips. "You like that, don't you, darling? Me telling you how good you make me feel."

"Yes, Automedon said, and whether it was in answer to this or because he'd started grinding forward so that his cock pressed into Phoenix's belly, 'yes' would do. A multi-purpose expression of assent.

"Allow me my turn to make you feel good, then. Has anybody ever sucked your cock?"

"No." He'd always been afraid to ask for it.

"You'll like it, I'm sure, I'm good at what I do. If you don't, just tell me. I'm interested in anything with you." Phoenix tipped Automedon's jaw up and kissed his neck. "Has anybody ever put their fingers in you?"

Automedon was so fucking glad he'd bathed earlier tonight, and thoroughly.

"Yes."

"Oh? I thought you'd not been with a man. Did you have a very adventurous girl?"

"No—it was just me. I touched myself there."

"*Fuck*. You're something, darling. Do you want me to? I could get you warmed up for my cock. Won't take a moment."

"Yes—but I also want—your mouth."

Phoenix helped Automedon off of him so that he could reach for a ledge by the window and dip his fingers into a bowl of oil he kept there.

"No need to worry, sweet. I can do both at once. Lie on your back."

Leaning over him, his fingers wet and his cock standing proud, Phoenix was more handsome than any man had any right to be. All the little scars and marks of his history on his body caught the light, and his red hair looked like it was aflame. There was a tiny bit of softness around his middle and his hips, which just came with age, but everywhere else his musculature was firm and wiry.

"Legs a little wider, dear."

Automedon obeyed him and Phoenix knelt between his legs, his fingers stroking over his entrance but not in, his mouth coming to the head of Automedon's cock. It took only a second for him to angle so he could fit the full length in the warm heat of his mouth, and when he pulled back while sucking on it, Automedon couldn't help but cry out.

"Ah! Yes!"

He'd assumed this would feel at least in some part like being inside a woman, but it was *nothing* of the sort. The suction was one thing, and then there was the deft, wet movement of Phoenix's tongue over him inside his mouth. There was the press of his lips on the head and the little accidental prickles of his beard. There was the heat of his breath through his nose against Automedon's pelvis. Automedon rocked his hips forward and Phoenix pulled back.

"Keep still. You're going to smash my nose in if you keep moving that way. Do you need me to hold you?"

Automedon had a hand pressed over his mouth, so he just nodded.

"Of course, love, can't expect you to know what to do on your first time. You've got a powerful movement to your hips, though. I'll bet you top well."

From behind his hand, there escaped a little squeal.

When next Phoenix's mouth lowered onto him, he also pressed his hips down with one hand and slipped his first two oiled fingers in. Automedon couldn't help it. He'd been worked to the edge by Phoenix's mouth and the warm pressure of being held to the bed and the warm fingers penetrating him—so different when they weren't his own!—he was too close.

He dropped his hand so he could say, "Phoenix—I'm going to—"

Despite this warning, Phoenix just swallowed and flattened his tongue along the bottom of Automedon's cock and let Automedon flood his mouth.

He pulled his fingers out while he swallowed again, his lips and tongue working Automedon through one of the most obscene-sounding orgasms Automedon had ever heard.

Phoenix kissed his hip. "That was lovely. Want a breather?"

"Maybe for a moment," Automedon said—gasped, rather, it certainly wasn't speech by any formal definition.

"Sure. Will you be alright if I get out of bed for a moment?"

"Mm-hm."

"Be right back, my dear."

He hummed the whole while he was away, as if he wanted Automedon to be aware that he was still aware, although on the other side of the room. The little tune, which Automedon didn't recognize, only stopped for a few seconds as Phoenix clattered around with something on the table, and started up again as he walked back over.

Automedon, for his part, was just trying to breathe. Phoenix hadn't even *fucked him* and it was still the best he'd ever had.

Phoenix brushed a kiss over his lips. "Had to wash my mouth out," he said. He got back into bed beside Automedon. He, too, was no longer fully hard, although he was closer to erect than Automedon was.

"Sorry I—didn't last very long."

"Oh, no, you actually lasted longer than I expected. You're, what, twenty?"

"Eighteen."

"Ha! You lasted *much* longer than I would expect, then. Not to worry, if you function the way most eighteen-year-olds do, I can get you ready to go again if you want, so you can take me this time."

"Oh, please—!"

"You don't have to beg. But you do sound pretty doing it. Would you like a drink?"

Automedon was actually sort of surprised at how dry his mouth was. His throat even clicked when he swallowed. "Yes, that would be good."

Phoenix gave him a cup—it was wine, but quite watered down. While Automedon drank, Phoenix lay on his side next to him and put one arm behind his head and stroked his chest and belly with his other hand. "You liked my mouth, then?"

"I liked your mouth," Automedon replied, unable to keep a smile off his lips. "I'm sure you don't have to come to *me* for reassurances that you're good in bed, Phoenix."

"Yes, but not every man's preference is the same. Although, there are few who dislike having their cock sucked, so I figured you would. And, there are also few men who I trust won't go bragging to the entire palace that I sucked their cock."

"And you estimated that I wouldn't?" Automedon asked.

"Mmn. That, and you also are so pretty I'd risk it even if your lips were looser than they seemed." With this, Phoenix palmed his chest, thumb rolling over one of his nipples, which had peaked from arousal and from being undressed in a warm but still-breezy room. He almost dropped the

cup. It was as if this touch was a direct connection to his cock. "Finish your drink, and we'll keep going, darling."

This would ordinarily not have been a difficult ask, but Automedon was hard pressed to simply finish off the rest of his drink while Phoenix was still touching and teasing his chest. Eventually, his touch moved lower, sweeping down his belly and over his cock to cup his balls and give him a little squeeze that nearly made him spit out his drink.

Even though the cup was still half-full, he set it down on the window-ledge with a definitive tap. "Ready."

"Eager little thing, aren't you?"

"Yes. Of course. You're—of course I'm eager for you."

"Sweet boy." Phoenix kissed him, not bothering with such gentle brushes this time before locking him in a passionate embrace, rolling atop him and letting Automedon feel every sinuous line of him against his own skin. Phoenix was not much larger than him, although he was taller, but like this, he felt all-encompassing. Automedon could lie beneath him forever, if Phoenix would let him. Phoenix kissed his neck, nipping and sucking little marks into his skin that would fade quickly but drove him wild in the moment.

"Oh—oh, stop—don't keep doing that, get *in*."

Phoenix froze as soon as Automedon said 'stop', and then he laughed, giving Automedon another kiss on the curve of his neck. "Peace, dear one. I'll take you, don't worry."

"When, I wonder?"

"Cheeky. Part your legs a bit more, give me some space. Or do you want me to turn you on your front?"

"No, this is, this is fine."

"Good. I'd like to be able to see your face."

He settled himself between Automedon's legs, pressing another kiss to his mouth. Pulling his stance a little wider, Phoenix shifted so that his groin was flush with Automedon's backside, not pressing in, but positioning himself to do so shortly.

"I want you to take a deep breath for me. When you let it out, I'll start pressing in—slow, don't worry. Tell me if it hurts, okay?"

It was very like how he had addressed Automedon when he was showing him the best way to stretch his leg. Gentle instruction, firm hands, and a caveat that Automedon could stop him at any time he wished. This was deeply comforting in a moment at which Automedon didn't have any more than the barest idea of what to expect.

The first push forward was barely anything more than his fingers—and then it kept going. So much deeper than his fingers had touched. Automedon couldn't help the strangled noise he made.

"Alright?" Phoenix asked, the same way he'd checked in when he'd been working the cramp out of Automedon's thigh.

"Yes. Just. Deep—like I can feel you in my throat—Fuck, you're really—you're *inside me*—"

"Too much?"

"No—well, maybe."

"Better like this?" He pulled back and started to thrust, a bit shallower, not burying himself to the hilt. And *that*, the slick drag of him in and out, felt good.

"Yes, that's better. Keep—keep doing me like that."

"Actually—one moment." Phoenix paused, and shifted around on the bed, coming back with a pillow. "Let me put this under your hips, give you a better angle."

He had to pull out to do it, and Automedon realized he liked him better inside than outside. The pillow was small and long, and lifted his hips about a handspan off the bedding. There was a coolness beneath him as the skin on his lower back that had warmed with sweat felt the breeze from the rest of the room. Phoenix slipped back into place, Automedon's thighs atop his.

"There we are. Let me know how this feels," he said, pushing back in.

The first thrust was nothing remarkable, except that there was less pressure on the muscle of his entrance, but the next, angled slightly different, felt *incredible*. It was as if Phoenix had stroked his cock from the inside, yet another part of his body with a direct connection to his arousal.

"*Fuck.*" Automedon's fingers twisted in the blankets and Phoenix chuckled, giving him another thrust.

"Can I go a bit faster?" Phoenix asked.

"I—sure. You can... whatever you want, oh gods, it all feels. *So good.*" Automedon knew his voice was pitching whiny, but he couldn't stop it if he tried.

"Like this," Phoenix said, jerking his hips faster for a few quick thrusts. "Is that—"

"Yes, keep going!"

Phoenix kept moving like that, keeping a steady pace that had his cock pressing up right where Automedon needed him. Automedon buried his face in his hands again, twisting his fingers into his own mass of curly hair. "*Ah! Phoenix—*"

After a while, his thrusts lengthened, slowed a little, and he added this dirty grind at the end that pushed his cock as deep into Automedon as he could reach. Automedon was warmed up enough to take his full length now, and he crossed his ankles behind Phoenix's back, keeping him right where Automedon wanted him.

Phoenix bent and kissed the line of his sternum, his beard scratching a little as he lifted his head again to look at Automedon. "I'm getting close, love. Can I—should I pull out?"

"Why would you?" Automedon reflexively squeezed Phoenix's waist between his thighs to fully divest him of that option.

"Just makes a mess. Some don't like how it feels."

"Will it—will it feel good for you?"

"Yes."

"Then do it."

"Fuck, you're perfect."

He kept going as he had been, but he was moving a little faster, shifting the blankets beneath them with the force of each devastatingly good fuck. He pressed his forehead to the center of Automedon's chest as if bowing before him while he released, stilling and crushing Automedon's hips in a bruising grip.

Aside from what was clearly a moan of orgasm, the most obvious sign that, yes, Phoenix had spent himself inside Automedon, was the trickle of wetness as he pulled out.

Phoenix lay down with him, forehead-to-forehead, pressing an innocently gentle kiss to Automedon's cheek. "Alright, my darling. How do you want me to get you off this time around?"

"Just stay where I can kiss you," Automedon said.

It was hardly a kiss—Automedon kept pulling back to gasp, but Phoenix was adamantly trying to fulfill that request, kissing his jaw and his neck when Automedon couldn't return his kisses.

Phoenix stroked his cock but he also slipped two fingers back inside Automedon, fucking through his own come inside of Automedon. The

sensation wasn't any more overpowering than Phoenix fingering him and sucking his cock, but it was that particular dirty thought that had Automedon approaching his second orgasm.

"Phoenix—"

"Yes, dear."

"Please!"

"What do you need?"

"Just—keep talking to me." That soft burr of a voice would absolutely be enough.

"Of course. Gods, look how pretty you are, even when you're a wreck. Took me so well, and I'd bet that if I was a dozen years younger you could take me again right after."

"I might—I might, anyway."

"Little spitfire. Show me what you can do to me," Phoenix said. "Gods, what I wouldn't give to have you ride me. You have an excellent seat."

"Haha, you wouldn't believe how many—ngh! How many Myrmidons hit me with that one."

"Yes, but I'm the only one who could make you really work for it. I'm the only one you'd have to actually keep your seat on instead of just bouncing aimlessly while a man lies still beneath you. I don't give a fuck about positioning, if I'm in you, I'm going to *fuck you*, not gonna make you fuck yourself."

"Phoenix!" It was practically a scream now.

"I'll take care of you. I hope you know that."

Automedon buried his face in Phoenix's shoulder. "Yeah. Yes!"

"I've got you." His voice was impossibly soft. "I've got you, you can let go for me."

He shouted, he sobbed, and he came, spilling between them while Phoenix whispered sweetness in his ear.

Phoenix warned him before he left the bed again, and this time he didn't hum his little tune, because he was only away for moments. Automedon drifted in a lazy half-sleep while Phoenix helped him clean up, and afterwards, when Phoenix lay beside him, Automedon looked him blearily in the face and gave him a smile.

"Hello, darling." Phoenix traced his jaw and lay close enough that he rested his head on Automedon's bicep while Automedon played with his red curls. "Have a good time?"

"Yes," Automedon sighed. "So good." He squeezed Phoenix's shoulder and Phoenix took his hand, lifting it to his lips so he could press a kiss to his fingertips.

Phoenix fell asleep, and Automedon fell in love.

Author's Note:

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